



NOAA Teacher at Sea
James Miller
Onboard NOAA Ship RAINIER
August 13 - 27, 2005

Log 11

Last Log

Day 13: Thursday, August 25, 2005

Location: Seward Ferry Dock

Weather: Sun and clouds, 60's

Wind: 5-10 kts.

Seas: calm

Itinerary: Mitrofinia leg complete

Science and Technology Log

Woke up last night at 2:00am during transit to Seward to catch so of the Northern Lights show. For a short while they jumped around the sky in the distance but never came directly above like they often do. If it is clear enough, I'll try again tonight in Seward.

After racing out to the public phone to make my first call home in two weeks, I spent the day touring Seward. It's a beautiful fishing town with great views of the glaciers and lots of tourists. It is much like Homer but better in that the town is in walking distance of the ship.

I went to the Sea Life Center, which has great exhibits of Alaska's wildlife. They have huge tanks with birds, sea lions, and harbor seals. They also had a live video feed of the sea lion rookery about 35 miles outside of Seward. There were three or four cameras set high up on the rocks overlooking the seals and the adjoining harbor. While I was there, a pod of transient killer whales entered the harbor at the sea lion rookery. They would zoom-in on the whales, and you could see them clearly through the video feed hunting and waiting for an unfortunate pup to fall off one of the rocks. It was an amazing sight and apparently uncommon because many of the center's employees came to watch. In the half hour I watched, the whales just swam by closely with their heads out of the water, but they didn't get any meals.

Met with surveyor, Dave Sinson, to get some training on a 3-D surveying software program that he'll be burning onto a disk for me to show my students. The software is actually downloadable for free off the internet and comes with sample data. It will be tremendously useful in demonstrating, visually, the crucial mission of the RAINIER.

Going to hike up Mt. Marathon tomorrow, which leads up to a glacial dome. On Saturday I'm going with some crewmembers to hike the famous Exit Glacier. Should be fun! From there it is home to N.Y.

Personal Log

Being this is my last log, I just want to direct my final personal comments to any potential Teacher-at-Sea candidates.

I have learned much over the last two weeks from this experience. There are so many real world lessons to be learned working on a NOAA ship such as the RAINIER. At first I was a bit reluctant about the parallels that could be drawn between the work onboard and my math classes, but it didn't take long before I saw the endless number of connections that can be integrated into K-12 classrooms.

The crew of the RAINIER is very professional, patient, and friendly. As I mentioned in an earlier log, I was amazed at the depth and breadth of their knowledge. I am the fifth TAS member aboard the RAINIER this year. You would think the crew would get tired of having to train another TAS member only to have them leave in a couple of weeks. At sea they are teachers, and I was grateful by how they would go above and beyond in terms of training me.

With regard to life aboard the ship, you adapt to it quickly. There's really something to the whole "getting your sea legs" thing. Your body does seem to adjust to the constantly moving world of a ship. Even the other visitor aboard, who had a difficult time with motion sickness early on, did fine after a few days.

I'm thankful for having been afforded this tremendous opportunity. I've grown personally and professionally, and I'm sure my students, in turn, will benefit from it.

TAS Miller out.